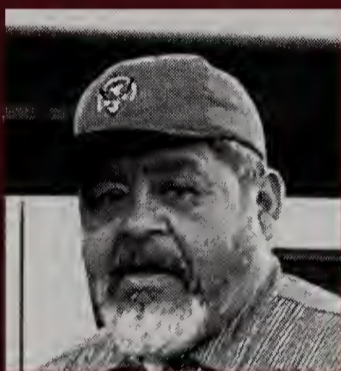
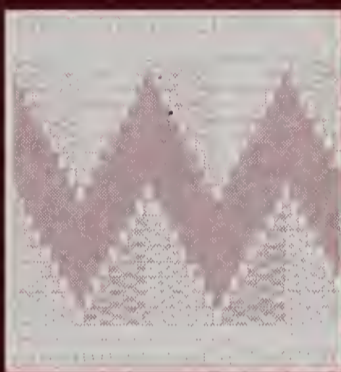
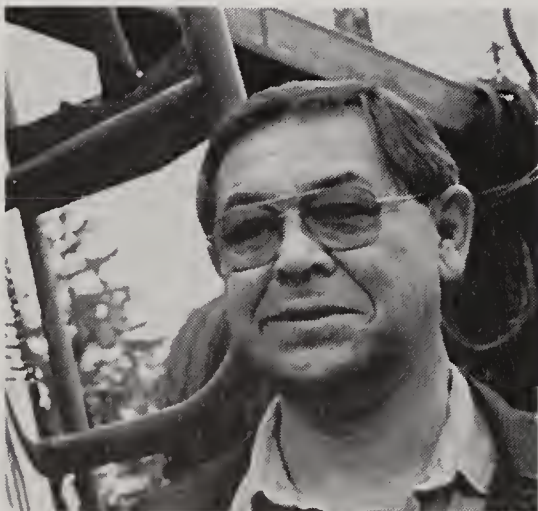
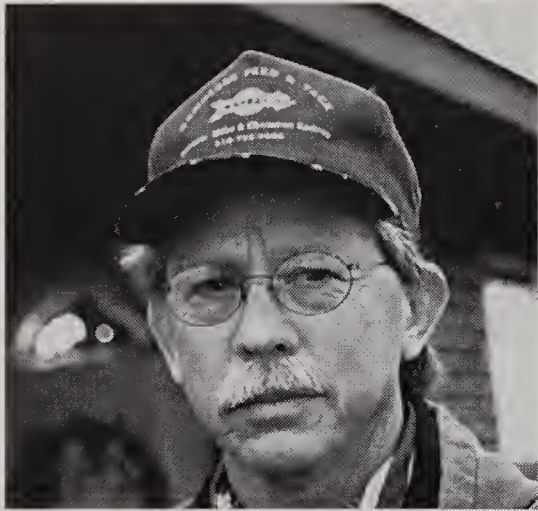


# Eye Damage "Retinopathy"



**Indian Health Service National Diabetes Program**





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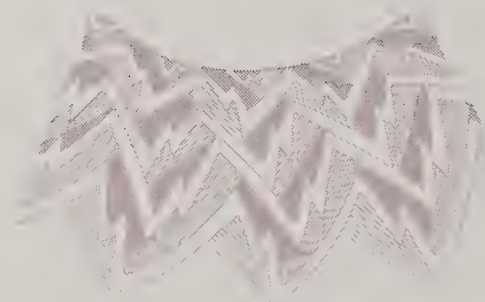
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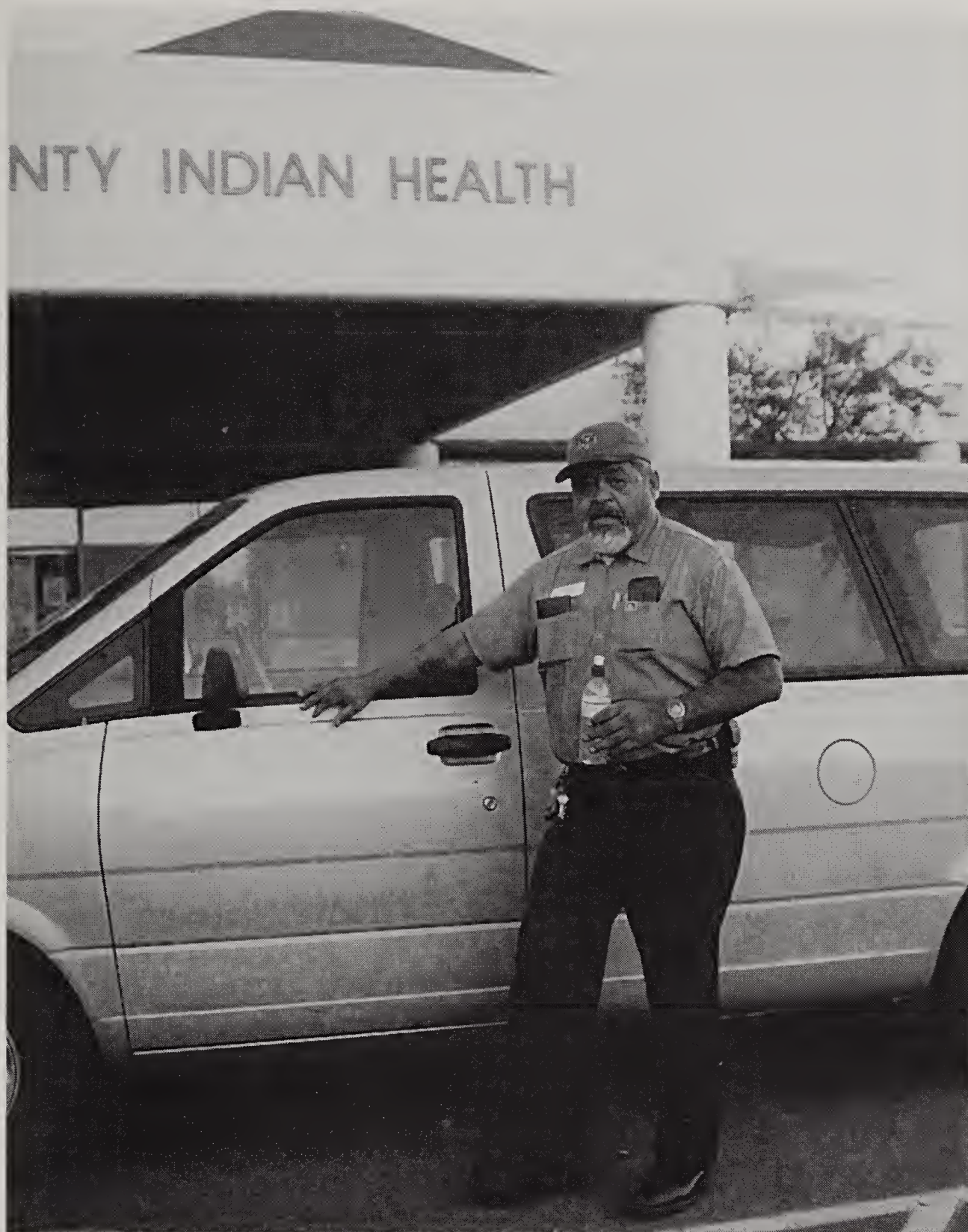
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**“I enjoy my driving job, and want to keep doing it. I get my eyes checked once a year. I don’t have any vision problems.”**

## **You can prevent eye damage**

This booklet will help you learn how to take care of your eyes.

**You can prevent or delay damage to your eyes.  
You can prevent blindness.**



# What is retinopathy?

Retinopathy (Ret-NA-pa-the) is a serious eye disease. It is caused by having high blood sugar for long periods of time. Retinopathy can lead to blindness.

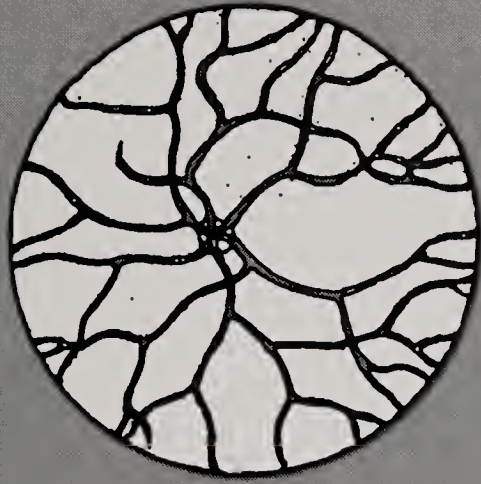
People with diabetes are at high risk for eye damage.

People who have high blood pressure are also at high risk for eye damage.

**You can prevent or delay damage to your eyes.  
You can prevent blindness.**

**“For work,  
I draw maps on  
a computer.  
My eyesight is  
very important.”**





Healthy blood vessels  
in the eye



Bleeding blood vessels  
in the eye

**High blood sugar  
can damage  
blood vessels  
in the eye.**

## **How does high blood sugar affect your eyes?**

There are many blood vessels in your eyes. High blood sugar over a long period of time can damage these blood vessels. This condition is called retinopathy.

When the blood vessels are damaged, they may bleed into the eye. If not treated, the bleeding can cause blindness.





**“I know there can be no signs of retinopathy. So, I get my eyes checked once a year. I have no vision changes, but still get my eyes checked.”**



## **How will you know if you have retinopathy?**

There usually are **no signs** of retinopathy. You may not have a vision change until there is severe damage.

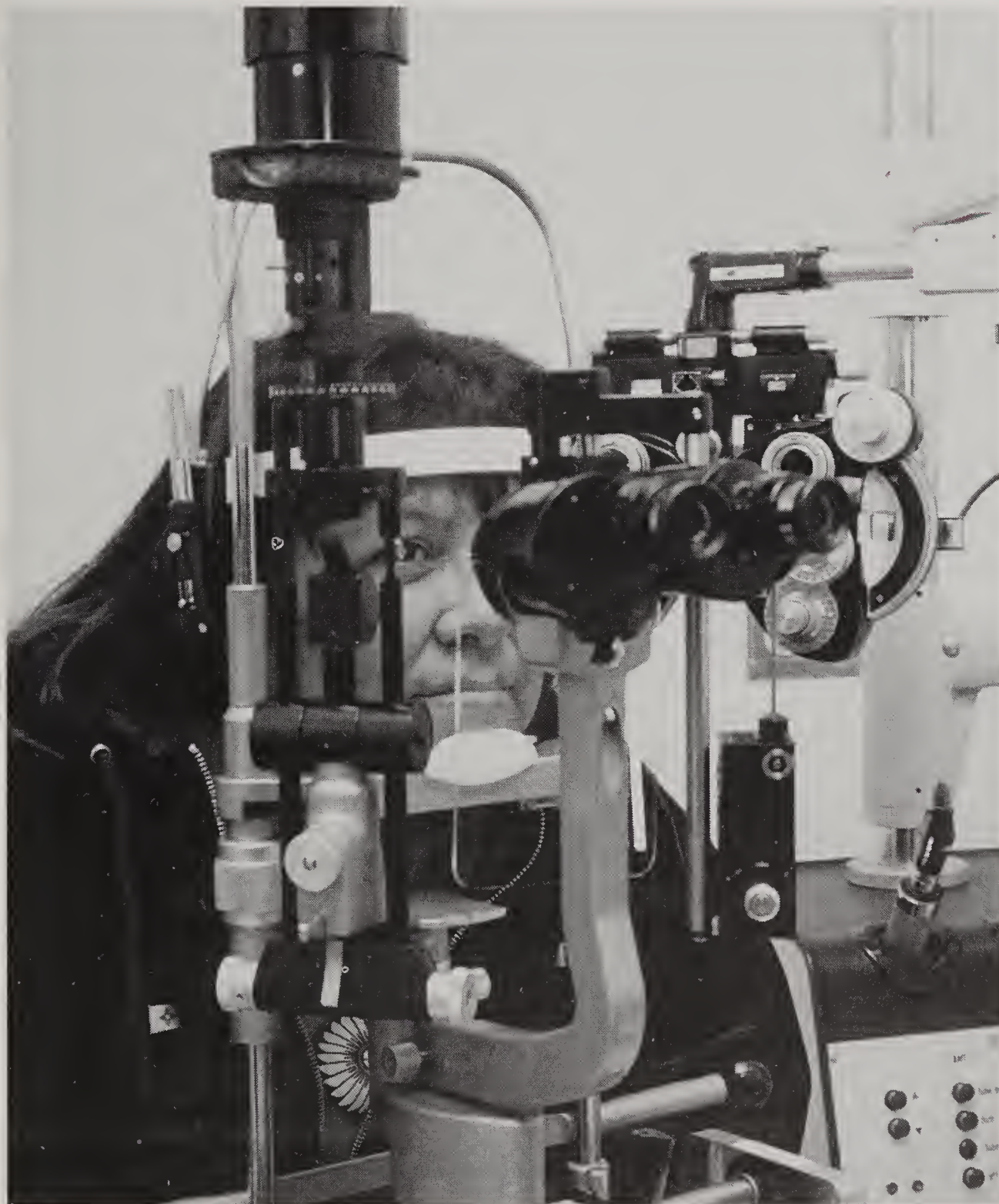
Getting eye exams and laser treatment can help prevent or delay eye damage.

Treatment is best if it is started early, before there are any vision changes.

# How often should you have your eyes checked?

A person with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam at least **one time each year**.

You can prevent blindness by having a yearly eye exam.



**“Getting my eyes checked once a year can prevent blindness.”**



# How does your doctor check your eyes?

Your doctor will put eye drops into your eyes. The eye drops help open your pupils.

The doctor can then look at all the blood vessels in your eyes. This is called a dilated eye exam.

**“I want to keep  
my vision.  
I get a dilated  
eye exam once  
each year.”**







**“I take care of my health and my eyes. I am physically active every day. I eat low-fat food.”**

## **What can you do to take care of your eyes?**

You can take care of your eyes. Here are four ways:

1. Get a dilated eye exam at least one time each year.
2. Control your blood sugar.
  - Check your blood sugar at home.
  - Make healthy food choices.
  - Be active. Walking is a good way to become more active.
3. Control your blood pressure.
  - Get your blood pressure checked often.
  - Take your blood pressure pills as prescribed.
  - Cut down on salt and salty foods.
4. Stop smoking.



**“I went in for my  
regular eye exam,  
and found out  
I needed laser  
treatment.  
I’m glad I caught  
it early.”**



## **Is there treatment for retinopathy?**

Yes. Laser treatment may help to stop the bleeding in your eyes. Laser treatment may not improve your vision if damage to your eyes is severe.

Get your dilated eye exam every year. Treatment works best if it is started early, before you have vision changes.



# How does laser treatment work?

Laser treatment uses a beam of light. The light passes through the eye to stop the blood vessels from bleeding.

Laser treatment is usually done in the doctor's office. You will be able to go home after the treatment is finished.



**“I’ve had laser treatment in each eye. I go to an eye specialist at least twice a year. I need good vision to do the things I enjoy.”**



# Are you at risk for other eye problems?

Yes. If your blood sugar is high, you are at risk for other eye problems. You are at risk for:

- Blurry vision. High blood sugar can cause your vision to be blurry.
- Cataracts (CAT-ter-acts). A cataract is the clouding of the lens of the eye.
- Glaucoma (glou-ko-MA). Glaucoma is an increase in the pressure of the eye. This can cause blindness.

Good blood sugar control can prevent or delay eye problems.

See an eye doctor right away if you have any vision changes or vision loss.

**“My vision  
changed.  
When I drove  
at night, it was  
blurry.”**

**12**







**“I eat low-fat,  
low-sugar food.  
I do chair  
exercises every  
day. I get a  
dilated eye exam  
once a year.”**

## **What can you do to take care of your eyes?**

These are the things you can do to take care of your eyes:

- Get a dilated eye exam at least one time each year.
- Control your blood sugar.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Stop smoking.
- See an eye doctor right away if you have any vision changes or vision loss.

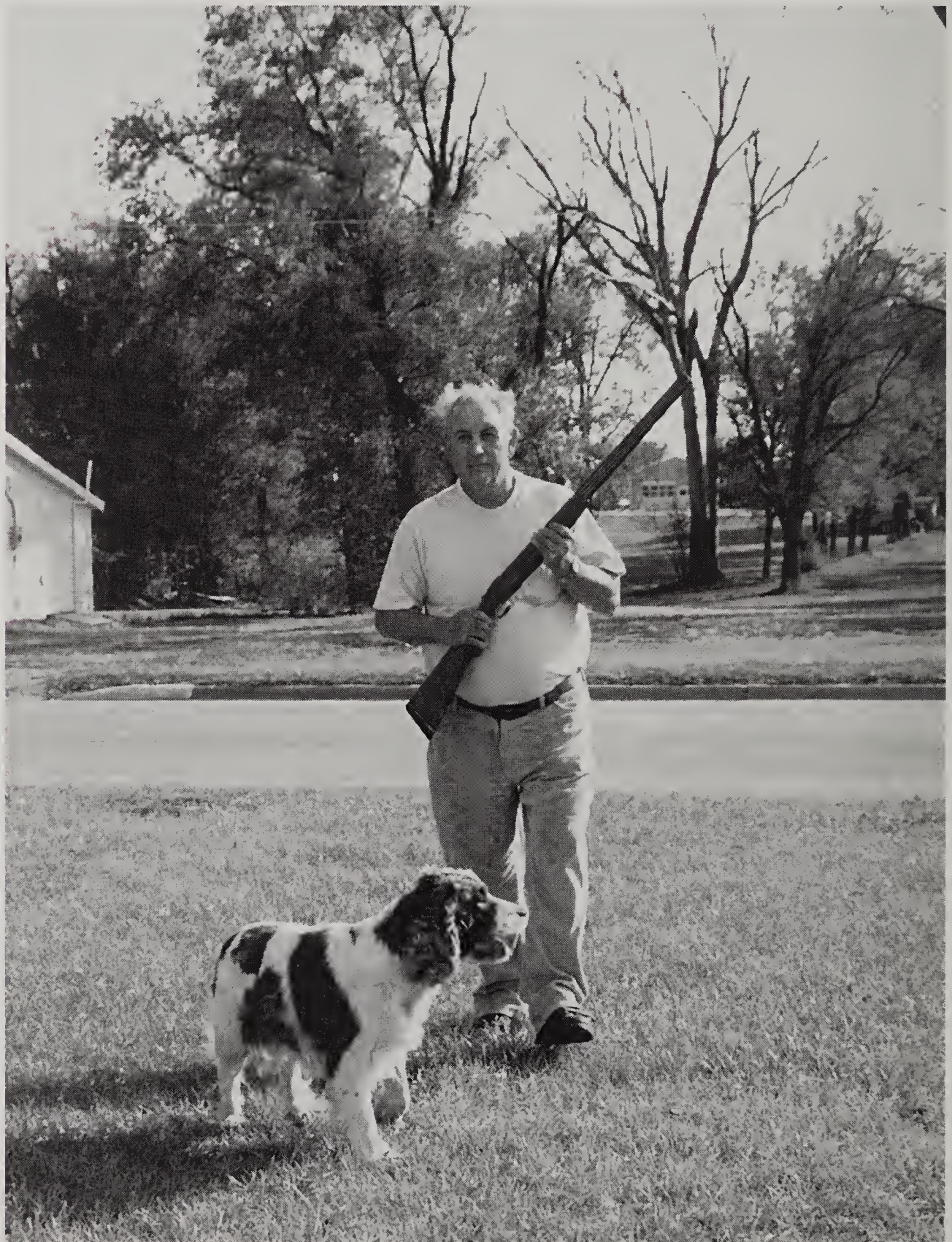
**You can prevent eye disease and damage.**



# Your health care provider can help

Talk to your health care provider about high blood sugar and eye damage. They can help you learn to control your blood sugar.

**“I love to hunt,  
to walk through  
the woods.  
It’s something I  
want to do for a  
long time.  
That’s why I  
control my  
blood sugar.”**





# Take care of your eyes. Mark the date and time of your eye exams.

Date	Time

## Notes

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Sincere thanks go to the many people who appear in this booklet. They generously shared their stories about diabetes, and allowed photographs to be taken to help others who have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes.





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